

# Culture Media Special Interest Group (SIG)

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The Culture Media Special Interest Group (SIG) of the Australian Society for Microbiology was formed in 1991 by a group of interested individuals after an upsurge in interest in the issue of media quality and the appearance that no common standards or consensus existed in this area in Australia. Increased interest, especially amongst medical microbiologists, in what was being done, or should be done, by way of assuring the quality of microbiological media made the issue contentious.

The National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) Australia, were amongst those seeking guidance in the area of Media Quality Control, being in the position of accrediting microbiology laboratories in the fields of biological testing and medical testing. They found little in the way of consistency and knew of no locally applicable guidelines on which to base their assessments and recommendations.

A working party of the Culture Media SIG developed a set of guidelines 'Guidelines for Assuring Quality of Medical Microbiological Culture Media' which were approved in September 1996. This document was widely used over the following years and was acknowledged as a valuable resource by microbiologists in medical as well as food, water, and pharmaceutical laboratories.

The SIG's *Guidelines for Assuring Quality of Food and Water Microbiological Media*, and *Guidelines for Assuring Quality of Solid Media used in Australia for the Cultivation of Medically Important Mycobacteria*, both first released in 2004, also form an integral role in accreditation and certification to relevant ISO standards. The Medical Mycology Guidelines were finally released in 2012 after a long gestation period, and the second edition of the medical microbiological media guidelines were also released in

2012. In 2014–2015, the second edition of the food and water guidelines were released, incorporating and recognising many of the relevant changes to the Australian Standards in food and water microbiology that had occurred over the intervening years, and the release of the international Standard ISO 11133.

The Food and Water guidelines inclusion of both food and water media was the inspiration behind the decision of ISO committee TC34/SC9 to include water media in the relevant ISO 11133 standard (currently in press), and parts of the International Standard have been heavily influenced by its Australian predecessor . . . from which we can draw great pride. Other citations of the ASM Guidelines include the UK NHS Guidance documents, ISO Standards, NATA documents, and peer-reviewed papers in publications including the Lancet.

## Recent activities

Apart from the updates to the Guidelines, the SIG has run sessions at recent national scientific meetings, including a workshop at the 2016 meeting in Perth. The workshop was well attended, and covered the changes to the second edition of the ASM Food and Water Guidelines, the NATA documents in this area, and ISO11133. Feedback from the attendees was extremely positive, with the main request that we repeat the workshop again on the east coast sometime in the near future.

## Your role in the SIG

Membership of the SIG is open to all in accordance with the ASM By-Laws. We welcome all and any feedback on the existing Guidelines at any time; any editing matters of improvement, where needed, can be incorporated into the next editions.

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